

# REVIEW and OUTLOOK

## A Lesson From the U-2

Since just about everybody is drawing lessons from the U-2 affair these days, we would like to offer one. That is that in the affairs of nations as in the affairs of men "pushing things too far" is a treacherous business.

That was the mistake of Mr. Khrushchev. At Paris he lost all that he might have gained from the uneasiness the incident aroused among our allies by trying to make out Russia as Innocent Nell and the United States as a wicked ogre. The President's political critics at home have also not been content with scolding the Administration for ineptness, which might have scored them some political points; they have pushed on to blame just about everything that's happened abroad on the handling of the U-2.

Only last week, for example, Senator Fulbright spoiled some otherwise thoughtful comments on the affair with the contention that the "essential point" is that "the U-2 is the reason" Mr. Khrushchev wrecked the Summit. This is such patent nonsense that nobody is apt to swallow it.

The real mistake the Administration made in that business, it seems to us, was in the untenable way it tried to justify what it did. And properly recognized that mistake can offer a valuable lesson for the United States in the future.

The big mistake lay not in spying on Russia or necessarily even in sending planes flying over the country to do so, although that is a dangerous procedure. Nor even in the dissembling about it, although that would better have been avoided. Nor, when put to it, frankly saying, "Yes, we have been spying."

For it is profoundly true that the necessities of this world make espionage imperative and it is splitting hairs to say one method is "right" and another "wrong." Furthermore, every nation in the world recognizes this imperative; whatever their statesmen say publicly, privately they understand and, rather than being incensed at the U-2, would marvel at its success.

So far, so good. The basic trouble

was that the State Department, taking this as a premise, then pushed on to declare that not only were "over-flights" dictated by necessity but that we claimed the privilege of making them as a matter of right. And not in the past only, but also in the future.

This may seem like a subtle distinction, but it was a mistake because it put the United States in an untenable position, a thing proved by the fact that we were forced to abandon it.

Here Senator Fulbright's analogy is apt. If a starving man steals, his justification lies in the imperative of survival; few of us would hesitate to act on it. But his justification must be that alone; it cannot be converted into a claim that burglary is in itself right. For that becomes a kind of moral juggling that the world will not accept.

Recognizing that distinction, however subtle, will let us keep the whole business of the U-2, and spying in general, in a proper perspective. And if we remember it, it will stand us in good stead in the future.

For it may well happen that the realities of the world may someday require us to act again in a way contrary to all that we stand for or profess to others. For example, we do not believe in forcible interference with the internal affairs of other nations. Yet conceivably even in a neighboring country might arise a danger that we will do what we do not believe in.

If such a necessity arises, let us act on it. But we can learn one lesson from the U-2. Our justification for the act is our safety; that and nothing more. Even then, people may debate the necessity for the deed, or its timing, or the adroitness of what is done. But these are quarrels of judgment only, and we will not be put in the untenable position of claiming the privilege to do what we would execrate in others.

Because we are civilized, it is difficult for us to live by the laws of a jungle. Yet if we must, then we will do better to understand and to say frankly that in the affairs of nations, as in the affairs of men, there are some deeds to be done simply because survival is the first imperative.